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FOUNDER OF THE FRIARS PREACHERS (Dominicans)

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(Author Unknown)

Cover art "Saint Dominic" by Italian early-Renaissance painter, Fra Angelico (1395 - 1455). This tempera and gold-on-wood painting is on the left panel of the Perugia Altarpiece painted in 1437 or 1438. It is housed in the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia, Italy. The painting is in the Public Domain. *



Perugia Altarpiece



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Saint Dominic, Confessor

Saint Dominic was born in the year 1170 at Calaruega, then Calaroga, in Castile. His father, Felix de Guzman, was royal warden of the village. Practically nothing is known with certainty of Don Felix, though the Guzmans were a noble family with illustrious connections.

When Dominick was fourteen years old he left the care of his uncle, who was the archpriest of Gumiel d'Izan, and entered the school of Palencia. For six years he followed the arts course and then for four years he studied theology. While still a student, Dominic was made a canon of the cathedral of Osma by his bishop, Martin de Bazan. The stipend of this benefice enabled him to carry out his theological studies to their conclusion and in 1195 he was ordained a priest. After his ordination Dominic went to Osma and took up his duties as a canon. The chapter lived a community life under the Rule of Saint Augustine with constitutions provided by Martin de Bazan. The community's regularity of observance was such as to provide an admirable school for the young priest. His life there was, so far as is known, undistinguished by any outward event. Instead, it was a gathering of strength and an exercising of virtues for the labors that were to come. Dominic seldom left the canons' house and spent much time in church—weeping for the sins of others, reading, and putting into practice the Conferences of Cassian. Blessed Jordan of Saxony learned from those who had known the holy canon during this time that he appeared as a bright ray of sunshine, in his own humble estimation the least among his brethren, in holiness the first, shedding around himself the fragrance of quickening life, like the sweet smell of pinewoods on a hot summer's day.

He went on from strength to strength, like the wide-spreading olive and the slender tall cypress. God gave Dominic a special grace of experiencing sorrow for sinners and for those in any kind of trouble. Thus, the thought of their misery wrung his heart with a grief that expressed itself outwardly in tears. He especially asked God for the help of true charity in the effective salvation of souls, for he could not regard himself as a real member of the mystical body of Christ until his whole time could be spent in gaining men, as his Lord had spent Himself for them on the cross. It is not surprising then that Dominic was soon made subprior. When Diego d'Azevedo became bishop of Osma in about 1201, Dominic succeeded him as prior of the chapter. He was then thirty-one years old and had been leading the contemplative life for six or seven years. It at last came to an end and in 1203 Dominic began his work in the world in an unexpected manner.

In 1203 Alfonso IX, King of Castile, chose the Bishop of Osma to go as ambassador to the Lord of the Marches to negotiate a match between the daughter of that prince and Alfonso's son, Prince Ferdinand. Which "Marches were in question is not known." Some believe it was a province in the north of Germany or in Sweden. Others believe it was a territory in Limousin in France. At any rate, the bishop took Dominic with him. On their way they passed through Languedoc, which was then filled with the heresy of the Albigensians. A man in whose house they lodged at Toulouse professed this heresy. Saint Dominic, pierced to the heart with compassion for the man, spent the whole night in discussion with him and with such effect that with the light of morning came the light of faith and the man abjured his errors. It is generally thought that, from this moment, Dominic knew what work God required of him.

The bishop and Dominic proceeded on their journey. They completed the treaty of marriage for King Alfonso and returned with the agreement to Spain. King Alfonso then sent the ambassadors back with a suitable retinue to conduct the princess to Castile for the marriage. The bishop and Dominic arrived at

her father's house only to assist at her funeral. They sent their equipage back into Spain and went on to Rome to ask Pope Innocent III for permission to preach the Gospel to the infidels in the East. The Pope at once appreciated their zeal and virtue but exhorted them rather to choose the neighboring harvest and thus oppose a heresy that threatened the Church at home. The bishop begged that he might be allowed to resign his episcopal see in Spain. His Holiness would not consent to this, but gave him permission to stay two years in Languedoc.

On their return, the bishop and Dominic made a visit to Citeaux, where the monks were officially appointed organizers and preachers against the Albigensians. Here, Don Diego received the Cistercian habit and almost at once set out for his diocese with Saint Dominic and a group of missionaries. At Montpellier, however, they met the Abbot of Citeaux with Peter of Castelnau and Raoul of Fontfroide, two monks who had been in charge of the missions in Languedoc. Don Diego and Dominic had observed that all efforts against the heresy had been fruitless. Now, they confirmed their observation.

The Albigensian system was based on the dualism of two opposing principles, good and evil. All matter was regarded as evil in itself. Therefore, the reality of the Incarnation was denied and all the sacraments rejected. Human perfection, so far as it was attainable, required complete abstinence from procreation and the minimum of eating and drinking. Suicide was, indeed, a most praiseworthy act. The rank and file of the Albigensians did not attempt this mandated austerity of life, but the inner circle of the "Perfect" maintained a heroic standard of purity and asceticism, against which the rather easygoing observance of the Cistercian monks looked mediocre.

In these circumstances a reasonable use of material things was the wrong weapon for Christian orthodoxy to use: the good common people followed those who were obviously leading a heroic life for Christ—and those were not the Cistercian preachers. When they saw this, Saint Dominic and the Bishop of Osma invited these preachers to follow more closely the example of their opponents. They invited them to give up traveling with horses and retinues and staying at the best inns with servants to wait on them. By using persuasion and peaceful discussion rather than threatening and being overbearing, they showed themselves worthy to be heard.

Their task was made more difficult and dangerous because Albigensianism, rather than a heresy from Christianity as first believed, was a different religion entirely. In its more fanatical forms, Albigensianism threatened human society as such.

Dominic maintained that the spreading torrent of Albigensianism could be stemmed and that God was pleased to make Dominic's preaching the instrument of His grace to open the ears and to soften the hearts of many. Dominic was the first to give what he urged others to give—except out of consideration for others he rarely ate more than bread and soup, his wine was two-thirds water, and he slept on the floor (unless, tired out with walking and talking, he lay down by the side of the road).

The first conference between the missionaries and the Albigensians was held at Servian in 1206. It lasted eight days, during which several remarkable conversions were wrought. After Servian, they preached for eight days at Béziers, where far greater numbers shut their ears against the Catholic faith. Diego and Dominic proceeded thence to Carcassonne, Verfeuil, Fanjeaux, Pamiers, and Montréal. They did not have any startling success at any of those locations. At one public debate, the judges submitted Saint Dominic's statement of the Catholic faith to "the ordeal by fire." Three times the written parchment was retrieved from the flames, unharmed. But the hold of Albigensianism, supported by the great lords for their own reasons (temporal and spiritual), was too strong. Diego and Dominic

discovered that right-living, exposition, and miracles could not move the people. Thus, the beginning of their mission was a failure and the disappointed Diego returned to Osma, leaving his companion in France. Dominic had already taken a step that was to be the first in the foundation of his order and by which the tide of Albigensianism began to be stayed.

Dominic was greatly concerned by the activities of women in propagating Albigensianism ("ordinary women" had more intellectual influence in the Middle Ages than they have now). Dominic was greatly concerned also that many Catholic girls of good family were exposed to evil influences in their homes and then sent to Albigensian convents to be educated. On the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen in 1206, Dominic had a sign from Heaven. As a consequence of that sign, within six months at Prouille, near Fanjeaux, he had founded a monastery of our Lady to shelter nine nuns, all of whom were converts from the heresy. "He put these servants of Christ under the protection of wonderful observance, of strict silence, and permanent enclosure. He gave them the spinning of wool as their manual work to occupy them in the intervals of their religious exercises. He entrusted the care of their souls to the brothers of his order, who were established outside the cloister. He kept for himself the title of prior and the spiritual administration of the convent," wrote Humbert de Romans. It appears that a house of the "brothers" referred to was founded at the same time and place. Thus, Saint Dominic began to provide for a supply of trained and virtuous preachers, for a shelter for converted ladies, for the education of girls, and for a permanent house of prayer.

The murder of the Pope's legate, Peter of Castelnau, who was assassinated by a servant of the Count of Toulouse and another ruffian, on January 15, 1208, and other outrages committed by the Albigensians, let loose a crusade with all the attendant horrors of civil war. The Albigensians were led by Raymund, Count of Toulouse, and the Catholics were led by Simon de Montfort, *de iure* Earl of Leicester, who captured Fanjeaux in 1209, Lavaur in 1211, and La Penne d'Agen in 1212. Béziers was sacked and the population decimated. The victories of Montfort were everywhere accompanied by harsh and cruel severity. Saint Dominic had no share in this and made use of no other arms to repulse injuries than those of meekness and patience. He never complained of insults or wrongs he received, courageously encountered every danger wherever the good of souls called him, and sought only all the good in his power for those who hated and persecuted him. When a guide deliberately led him out of his way through brier thickets and over rocks, Dominic smilingly thanked him for showing him a short cut. When he had escaped from assassins, he replied to a heretic who asked what he would do if he were caught, that, "I would ask you to kill me slowly and painfully, a little at a time, and so earn a more glorious crown in Heaven." All this was very different from the methods of the official converters. When the army of the crusade approached, Saint Dominic redoubled his earnestness among the people and saved many. When he preached among the crusaders, he found many disorders, vices, and ignorance of the mysteries of faith and the duties of a Christian life. These conditions were found in many who had joined that army merely for the sake of plunder. They moved his compassion and zeal, and he labored among them with no less diligence than among the Albigensians.

The military power of the Albigensians, under Peter of Aragon, was finally crushed at the battle of Muret in 1213. It was a remarkable victory that Simon de Montfort attributed to the prayers of Saint Dominic, on his knees in the church of Saint James. To the sorrow of Saint Dominic, who was distressed at the Earl's excesses because they were personal friends, the war was unjustly carried on for aggression and conquest until Montfort was killed in battle in 1218.

Saint Dominic had no illusions as to the value or propriety of inducing Christian orthodoxy by military activity. Neither did he, as is sometimes alleged, have anything to do with establishing inquisitions in concert with the civil power, which was done in the Midi from the end of the twelfth century. *

Saint Dominic never appears to have in any way concurred in the execution of any of those unhappy persons who then suffered. The authors of his life mention that, by his entreaties, he saved the life of a young man who was going to the place where he was to be burnt. Saint Dominic assured the judges that the young man would die in the Catholic faith. This was verified when, some years later, the man became a Catholic and made a happy end in Saint Dominic's own order. The original historians mention no other arms to have been used by him against the heretics than the weapons of instruction, patience, penance, fasting, tears, and prayer. Saint Dominic also rebuked his ex-troubadour supporter, Foulques, Bishop of Toulouse, when the bishop went on a visitation accompanied by soldiers, servants, and sumter-mules. Saint Dominic rebuked the bishop with the words, "The enemies of the Faith cannot be overcome like that. Arm yourself with prayer, rather than a sword; wear humility rather than fine clothes."

Efforts were made on three occasions to raise Saint Dominic to the episcopate: of Béziers in 1212, of Comminges in 1213, and of Navarre in 1215. Each time, Saint Dominic refused firmly. Saint Dominic had been called to another work.

Saint Dominic had now spent nearly ten years preaching in Languedoc and ten years as leader (even with no canonical status) of a small band of special preachers, whom he had given a headquarters at Prouille. All this time, he had worn the habit of a regular canon of Saint Augustine and followed that rule.

He earnestly desired, however, to revive an apostolic spirit in the ministers of the altar, the want of which in many was a subject of great scandal to the people and a great source of the overflowing of vice and heresy. This apostolic spirit is founded on a sincere contempt of the world and a perfect disinterestedness; for as long as the love of the world and attachment to its vanity, delights, and riches keeps possession of a heart, there can be no room for the Holy Ghost. The fences by which this apostolic spirit had been formerly maintained in the clergy were then, by custom, easily broken through by many without scruple. Saint Dominic desired to raise others who might be stronger. With this view, he envisioned an order of religious men, not like the monks who were contemplatives and not necessarily priests. He envisioned an order of religious men who to retirement and exercises of contemplation should join a close application to sacred studies and all the functions of a pastoral life, especially that of preaching. He wished to prescribe perpetual abstinence from flesh meat, to prescribe severe poverty, that his friars should receive their subsistence from the alms of the faithful, and to prescribe his friars should be organized in such a way that their activities could be extended under central control from one diocese to any part of the Church, forming an institution of a sort new in Christian history.

Saint Dominic's principal aim was to multiply zealous preachers in the Church, preachers whose spirit and example might be a means to spread the light of faith and the fire of divine charity, and to assist the pastors in healing the wounds the Church had received from false doctrine and ill-living. To ensure

* Later, the Dominican order unwillingly received charge of the Inquisition. In 1243 they asked to be relieved of the commission, but Pope Innocent IV refused the petition. The provincial chapter of Cahors in the next year forbade the acceptance of any monies accruing from its work. The fifth master general, Blessed Humbert de Romans, instructed the friars to avoid its duties whenever possible. Only two of the inquisitors general of Spain were Dominicans. The notorious and somewhat maligned Torquemada was one of them.

Saint Dominic would have means at his disposal, in 1214 Foulques of Toulouse gave him a benefice at Fanjeaux and extended his episcopal approval to the embryonic order in the following year. A few months later Dominic accompanied Foulques to the Fourth Lateran Council as his theologian.

Pope Innocent III, who had then governed the Church eighteen years, received Saint Dominic with great kindness and gave his approbation of the nunnery of Prouille. Moreover, Pope Innocent drew up a decree, which he inserted as the tenth canon of the council, to enforce the obligation of preaching, to enforce the necessity to choose for pastors men who are powerful in words and works, men who will instruct and edify their flocks both by example and preaching, a neglect of which was the source of the ignorance, disorders, and heresies that then reigned in several provinces, and to enforce and order that fit men be selected specially for the office of preaching. Obtaining approval for Saint Dominic's great project was no easy matter. His vision contained too many innovations for permission to be given hurriedly, especially as that very Council had legislated against the multiplication of new religious orders. It is said that Pope Innocent had decided to refuse but, the night following, Pope Innocent dreamed he saw the Lateran church in danger of falling and Saint Dominic stepped in and supported it with his shoulders. Be that as it may, the Pope at last gave a guarded approval of the new order by word of mouth, bidding the founder return to his brethren and select which of the already approved rules they would follow.

They met at Prouille in August of 1216 and, after consultation with his sixteen colleagues (eight of whom were Frenchmen, seven Spaniards, and one Englishman) he selected the rule of Saint Augustine, the oldest and least detailed of the existing rules. The rule of Saint Augustine was written for priests by a priest, who was himself an eminent preacher. Saint Dominic added certain particular constitutions including some borrowed from the order of Prémontré. Pope Innocent III died on July 16, 1216, and Honorius III was chosen in his place. This change delayed Saint Dominic's second journey to Rome. In the meantime, Saint Dominic finished his first friary at Toulouse, to which the bishop gave the church of Saint Roniain and wherein the first community of Dominicans under the rule of Saint Augustine assembled and began community life under vows.

Saint Dominic arrived at Rome with a copy of his constitutions in October of 1216. He found access to his Holiness difficult for some time, but eventually Pope Honorius III confirmed Saint Dominic's order and its constitutions by two bulls, dated 22nd and 23rd December, the same year. "Considering that the religious of your order will be champions of the faith and a true light of the world, we confirm your order." Instead of returning at once to Toulouse, Dominic remained in Rome until after Easter, preaching with great effect. He pointed out to the Pope that many of the clerics attached to the Pope's court could not attend outside lectures and courses of instruction and, therefore, having a domestic master of sacred studies in the Pope's residence would be of great advantage. His Holiness thereupon created the office of Master of the Sacred Palace to serve as the Pope's personal canonist and theologian, assist at consistories, and nominate the Pope's preachers. Pope Honorius obliged Saint Dominic to take upon himself that charge and the position has been committed to one of his order ever since. While in Rome, Saint Dominic wrote a commentary on the epistles of Saint Paul that was much commended by writers of that age but now is lost. Saint Dominic had learned what an inexhaustible treasure of piety and spiritual knowledge a Christian preacher can draw from the inspired writings of Saint Paul.

During this time, Saint Dominic formed friendships with Cardinal Ugolino, afterwards Pope Gregory IX, and Saint Francis of Assisi. The story goes that Dominic saw in a vision the sinful world threatened by the divine anger but saved by the intercession of Our Lady, who pointed out to her Son two figures. Saint Dominic recognized himself in one, but the other was a stranger. Next day, while at prayer in a church, he saw a ragged beggar come in and recognized the beggar at once as the man of his dream.

Saint Dominic approached the beggar, embraced him, and said, "You are my companion and must walk with me. For if we hold together no earthly power can withstand us." This meeting of the two founders of the friars is commemorated twice a year when, on their respective feast days, the brethren of the two orders sing Mass in each other's churches and afterwards sit at the same table "to eat that bread which for seven centuries has never been wanting." The character of Saint Dominic is sometimes assumed to suffer by comparison with Saint Francis. The comparison is meaningless because the two men actually complete and balance one another—one corrects and fills out the other and they meet on the common ground of the Faith, tenderness, and love.

On August 13, 1217, the Friars Preachers met under their leader at Prouille. Saint Dominic instructed them on their method of preaching and teaching and exhorted them to unremitting study. He, in particular, reminded them that their first business was their own sanctification and that they were to be the successors of the Apostles in establishing the kingdom of Christ. He added instructions on humility, distrust of themselves, and an entire confidence in God alone, by which they were to stand invincible under afflictions and persecutions and to courageously carry on the war against the world and the powers of Hell. Then, on the Feast of the Assumption, to the surprise of all, for heresy was again gaining ground in all the neighborhood, Saint Dominic broke up his band of friars and dispersed them in all directions. "We must sow the seed," he said, "not hoard it. You shall no longer live together in this house." Four were sent to Spain, seven to Paris, two returned to Toulouse, two remained at Prouille, and the founder himself went back to Rome the following December. He wished now to resign his part in the nascent order and go into the East to evangelize the Cuman Tartars. But this was not to be.

On Saint Dominic's arrival in Rome, the Pope gave him the church of Saint Sixtus (San Sisto Vecchio). While making a foundation there, the saint lectured on theology, both in the Palace and in the City, and preached in Saint Peter's with such eloquence as to draw the attention and admiration of the whole city.

Theodoric relates that a certain gentlewoman, Gutadona, came home one day from hearing Saint Dominic's sermon, and found her little child dead. In her grief, she took him out of the cradle and carried him in her arms to Saint Sixtus's, where she laid him at the feet of the saint. He was moved to compassion and, after saying a fervent prayer, made the sign of the cross on the child and restored him to life. The Pope was to publish this miracle in the pulpit, but the entreaties of Saint Dominic prevented him. Saint Dominic likewise raised, whole and sound, a mason who had been crushed by the fall of a vault in building the Convent of Saint Sixtus and he restored to health a religious man, whilst his brethren by his bedside were reciting the prayers appointed for one dying.

At this time a large number of nuns lived in Rome without keeping enclosure and, almost without regularity, some were dispersed in small monasteries while others were in the houses of their parents or friends. Pope Innocent III had made several attempts to assemble all such nuns into one enclosed house, but had not been able, with all his authority, to compass it. Pope Honorius III assigned this reformation to Dominic. Dominic asked that three cardinals be nominated as representatives with him and his Holiness appointed Ugolino, Dean of the Sacred College; Nicholas, Bishop of Tusculum; and Stephen of Fossa Nuova. Trying to remove several difficulties from the task to assemble all the nuns, Saint Dominic, offered to leave to these nuns his own monastery of Saint Sixtus. This was a well-suited solution since the monastery was already built and ready to receive them. For his friars, Saint Dominic received a house of the Savelli, on the Aventine, with the church of Saint Sabina.

The nuns at the Monastery of Saint Mary, beyond the Tiber, were the principal and most obstinate to be reformed. Saint Dominic went there with the three cardinals and urged the nuns with such force of reasoning and so much charity that he overcame their objections. The abbess was the first to agree and

then all the nuns, except one, agreed to obey. But no sooner were the cardinals gone than the parents, friends, and protectors of the nuns ran about buzzing in their ears that they would repent having made such a hasty step, which could never be recalled. They buzzed further that the nuns' house was too ancient and noble, their conduct too virtuous and irreproachable, their privileges of too old a standing to be abrogated, and that no authority could submit them to rules to which they had never engaged themselves, and under which they would never have taken up that manner of life. Accordingly the whole community changed their former mind and determined not to comply.

Saint Dominic gave them some days to reflect and prevented the Pope from having to resort to strong measures, which never gain the heart and are seldom expedient in duties that must be voluntary. In the meantime, Dominic fasted and prayed, recommending the matter to God. After some days, Dominic went again to Saint Mary's, said Mass there, and afterwards spoke to the nuns, reproaching them for their reluctance, saying, "Can you then repent of a promise you have made to God? Can you refuse to give yourselves up to Him without reserve and to serve Him with your whole hearts?" His natural sweetness was hard for anyone to resist and his exhortation was so strong and affecting that finally the abbess and all her nuns confirmed their readiness to comply with the Pope's wishes. Moreover, they asked that Saint Dominic himself be their director and give them his own rule. He agreed to this.

It is related that, on Ash Wednesday in 1218, the abbess and some of her nuns went to their new monastery of Saint Sixtus and were in the chapter house with Saint Dominic and the three cardinals, a messenger ran in to say that the young Napoleon, Cardinal Stephen's nephew, was thrown from his horse and killed. At this news, Saint Dominic endeavored first to alleviate Cardinal Stephen's grief; then ordered the body of Napoleon to be brought into the house, and bid Brother Tancred make an altar ready that he might say Mass. When he had prepared himself, the cardinals with their attendants, the abbess with her nuns, the friars, and a great concourse of people went to the church. The Sacrifice being ended, Dominic, standing by the body, disposed the bruised limbs in their proper places, prayed, rose from his knees, and made the sign of the cross over the corpse. Then, lifting up his hands to Heaven, he cried out with a loud voice, "Napoleon, I say to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise." That instant, in the sight of all, the young man arose sound and whole.

Friar Matthew of France had successfully made a foundation at the University of Paris and Saint Dominic sent some brethren to the University of Bologna, where, under the guidance of Blessed Reginald of Orleans, one of the most famous of Dominican establishments was begun. In 1218 Saint Dominic took a journey through Languedoc into Spain and founded a friary at Segovia and another at Madrid with a convent of nuns directed by his brother, Blessed Manes. Dominic returned to Toulouse in April 1219, and from thence went to Paris, the first and only visit he made to that city.

After two months he left Paris and, having founded convents on his road at Avignon, Asti, and Bergamo, arrived at Bologna about the end of summer in 1219. He made his ordinary residence there to the end of his life. In 1220 Pope Honorius III officially confirmed Dominic's title and office as master general and first general chapter of the order was held on Pentecost in Bologna. There, the final constitutions were drawn up, which made the organization of the Friars Preachers "the most perfect of all the monastic organizations produced by the Middle Ages" (Hauck). In the same year the Pope ordered the Dominicans to undertake a preaching crusade in Lombardy, in company with certain monks. Saint Dominic took the field, but the mission was abortive, although it is said 100,000 heretics were reconciled.

Wherever Saint Dominic traveled, he preached and he never ceased to pray for the conversion of infidels and sinners. If it had been God's will, it was his earnest desire to shed his blood for Christ and to travel

among the barbarous nations of the earth to announce to them the good news of eternal life. Therefore, he identified the ministry of the word as the chief end of his institute. He wanted all his religious to be applied to it—everyone according to his capacity and those with particular talents for it never to discontinue the office of preaching except in intervals allotted to retirement that they might preach to themselves in silence. The vocation of his friars is “to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation,” and for this high work the religious are prepared by long habits of virtue, especially of prayer, humility, self-denial, and obedience. He frequently repeated a saying to them, “A man who governs his passions is master of the world. We must either rule them or be ruled by them. It is better to be the hammer than the anvil.” He taught his missionaries the art of preaching to the heart by animating them with charity. Once after preaching, he was asked in what book he had studied his sermon. He replied, “In no other than in that of love.” From the beginning, learning, study of the Bible, and teaching were of first importance to the Dominicans. Some of the order’s chief achievements have been in intellectual work and the founder has been called “the first minister of public instruction in modern Europe.” But a prominent spirit of prayer and recollection has at all times been the characteristic of the Dominicans, as it was of Saint Dominic. A great figure in the order, Bartholomew de Martyribus, Archbishop of Braga, addresses himself to all pastors on this subject:

“Woe to you, ministers of the Lord, if the source of religion be dried up in your souls. This tender and sincere spirit of piety is the spring of living water which gives fertility to all our virtues and sanctifies all our actions, which without it are dry and barren. This is the heavenly wine which fortifies our hearts with a joy altogether divine. This is the balsam which mollifies our passions. It is the tongue with which we speak to God and without which our souls are dumb before Him. It is this that draws down upon us the heavenly dew that strengthens our hearts. It is the spiritual nourishment which enables us to labor with fruit in the vineyard of the Lord.”

Saint Dominic was inflexible in maintaining the severe discipline he had established. Coming back to Bologna in 1220 after seeing the poverty of Saint Francis at Cracow, he was so much offended to find the convent of his friars in that city being built in a stately manner not consistent with his idea of the austere poverty and penance which he professed by his rule, that he would not allow the work to be continued. This was the discipline and strength that was behind the rapid spread of his order. By the second general chapter in 1221 the order had some sixty friaries divided into eight provinces. Dominican friars had already got to Poland, Scandinavia, and Palestine and Brother Gilbert, with twelve others, had established monasteries in Canterbury, London, and Oxford. The Order of Preachers is still world-wide.

After the second general chapter, which was held at Bologna, Dominic visited Cardinal Ugolino at Venice. On his return he was ill and was taken to a country place for the better air. But he knew he was dying. To his brethren he spoke of the beauty of chastity and, having no temporal goods, made his last testament in these words: “These, my much-loved ones, are the bequests which I leave to you as my sons: have charity among you; hold to humility; keep willing poverty.” He spoke more at length on the subject of poverty and then, at his request, was carried back to Bologna that he might be buried “under the feet of his brethren.” Gathered round him, they said the prayers for the dying; at the Subvenite, Saint Dominic repeated those great words, and died.

It was the evening of 6th August, 1221; he was fifty-one years old; and he died in that poverty of which he had so lately spoken: “in Brother Moneta’s bed because he had none of his own; in Brother Moneta’s habit, because he had not another to replace the one he had long been wearing.” It may be said of him after death what Blessed Jordan of Saxony wrote of him in life: “Nothing disturbed the even temper of his soul except his quick sympathy with every sort of suffering. As a man’s face shows whether his

heart is happy or not, it was easy to see from his friendly and joyous countenance that he was at peace inwardly. In spite of his unfailing gentleness and readiness to help, no one could ever despise his radiant nature, which won all who met him and made him attract people from the first." When he signed the decree of canonization of his friend in 1234, Pope Gregory IX (Cardinal Ugolino) said that he no more doubted the sanctity of Dominic than he did that of Saint Peter or Saint Paul.

Saint Dominic, Pray for us.



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